

VZCZCXRO8646
OO RUEHFL RUEHNP
DE RUEHRO #0945/01 2111604
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 291604Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0671
INFO RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE IMMEDIATE 3139
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN IMMEDIATE 9484
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES IMMEDIATE 3286
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 000945

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/30/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [IT](#) [NATO](#)
SUBJECT: ITALY: PROPOSED WAY FORWARD ON AFRICOM

REF: A. ROME 893
[1](#)B. STATE 80262
[1](#)C. ROME 944

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Spogli for reasons 1.4 b and d

[1](#)1. (U) This cable is an ACTION request. Please see paragraph 2.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary and Action Request. Post welcomes reftel instructions to begin official consultations on the establishment of U.S. AFRICOM Army and Navy service component headquarters in Italy. We have already broached the subject with key Italian political leaders and have received positive initial reactions. While we do not necessarily believe that Italy's full assent will be conditioned by the choice of location for the overall headquarters, establishing the headquarters in another European country would be a significant blow to Italy's efforts to be a strong partner and would significantly impair our efforts to obtain Italian buy-in for this undertaking. Our interlocutors have signaled to us that discussions on AFRICOM must be initiated at the political level and that in those initial discussions the GOI will make clear their strong desire for the off-continent HQ to be located in Italy. We expect that at the political level negotiations on AFRICOM will be "slow played" until they have closure on the question of the location of the AFRICOM HQs. Therefore, we respectfully request that Washington expedite its deliberations on the HQ location.

[1](#)3. (C) Summary continued. We will face complex legal issues as we move forward. As we negotiate the basis for AFRICOM assets and operations in Italy, we recommend that the Department and DOD consider ways to keep negotiations simple, clear, and, to the extent possible, under existing arrangements. In order to proceed expeditiously, post will try to reach an agreement that does not necessitate Parliamentary approval. Emphasizing AFRICOM's availability to NATO for NATO's Africa missions will be key to achieving this end. End summary.

[1](#)4. (C) Per reftels, the Ambassador, DASD Whelan, and DASD Fata have discussed the issue of U.S. plans for AFRICOM at the highest levels within Italy including with the PM's principle Adviser (U/S Gianni Letta) and with the CHOD. The initial reaction has been positive; however, the devil will be in the details.

[1](#)5. (C) The GOI has made very clear their desire to host the off-continent AFRICOM HQ. Italy seeks to increase its influence in Africa given its geographic proximity, and sees a synergy between U.S. goals in AFRICOM and the GOI's strategic goals in Africa. Letta told DASD Whelan and the Ambassador that he hoped the U.S. would seriously consider Italy given its geographic proximity to Africa, the history

of strong U.S./Italy bilateral relations, and most importantly the excellent U.S./Italian mil/mil relations especially with respect to basing. Letta emphasized the GOI's history of providing operational flexibility for U.S. forces and the GOI's intent to continue to do so. Furthermore, as the proposed home to two of the service component commands, he argued Italy would be a natural location for the HQ.

Approaching the working levels:

16. (C) Negotiations at the working level will be greatly facilitated by having first reached a consensus at the political level on the way forward. CHOD Camporini told DASD Fata that any change in the missions of U.S. forces in Italy is a "political problem", indicating that he will look to his political leadership to set the direction. Once we begin negotiations at the working level we will have to tackle certain legal/logistical problems. Post recommends keeping the agreements as simple and clear as possible and pursuing a course of action which can be captured under existing agreements.

Way Forward:

17. (C) Given the Italian government's emphatic desire to host the AFRICOM off-continent HQ and the significant amount of work which will be required to negotiate a legal framework for the AFRICOM service component commands and/or AFRICOM HQ,

ROME 00000945 002 OF 002

it is imperative to know up front if stationing AFRICOM HQ in Italy is a realistic expectation as the Italians are likely to "slow play" the talks on service component commands until they are certain of the outcome on the location for the HQ. PM Berlusconi may raise the issue with VPOTUS during his early September visit to Italy.
SPOGLI